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ABSTRACT

This speech relates the results of a study designed to discover what combination of loving-or-rejecting and casual-or-demanding mothers and fathers is likely to produce the highest achievement orientations among girls and what combination of parent-child relations is least productive of achievement orientations. The data for this study came from the questionnaire responses of 949 girls who were seniors in high school in 1967. The self-administered questionnaire included a scale of parent-child relations as well as measures of actual achievement (average high school grades) and aspirations for achievement (educational and occupational expectations). The highest overall achievement orientation was found among girls whose mothers were loving and demanding while their fathers were rejecting and casual. In contrast the lowest achievement-oriented girls had mothers who were rejecting and casual and fathers who were loving and demanding. This reversal demonstrates that the particular combination of relationships with both parents is an important element in the achievement orientations of young women. The combinations of parent-child relations associated with high achievement orientations for girls was markedly different from those for boys. (Author/LP)

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PARENT CHILD RELATIONS AND WOMEN'S ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATIONS

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PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS AND WOMEN'S ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATIONS*

There is ample evidence that the nature of the parent-child relationship is related to the level of aspirations for achievement among boys. Until now an apparent tradition of masculine bias has kept us from examining the same relationship for girls. As one example, in their study of family influences upon the occupational aspirations of college students, Dynes, Clarke, and Dinitz (1956:213) stated that "Since the aspirational scale was phrased in terms of occupational advancement, the women in the sample expressed their aspiration in terms of advice they might give their husbands." Most studies of achievement orientations neglect girls, although there are a few notable exceptions, such as Sewell and Shah (1968). While Turner (1964) has given us detailed descriptions of the nature of women's ambition, he did not investigate the family antecedents of that ambition. As women continue to break the traditional sex role and occupational barriers, an analysis of the influence of parent-child relations upon the achievement orientations of girls will be increasingly important.

A large portion of the literature on parent-child relationships is concerned with either the mother-child relationship or the parent-son relationship. In their review of the recent research on parent-child relationships, Walters and Stinnett (1971:101) concluded that when they do exist, "Studies of father-child relationships are almost invariably concerned with fathers and sons, and the specific impact of the fathers on daughters has virtually been left unexplored."

In earlier papers, we have reviewed the previous studies of the family sources of achievement orientations (Kammeyer, Miller and Mitchell, 1972a

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and 1972b). We found that two principal dimensions of parent-child relations have been isolated again and again by child development researchers. These may be labeled loving-rejecting and casual-demanding. Children have a relationship with each of their parents on the loving-rejecting dimension and a position on the casual-demanding dimension.

Although some researchers had found one or the other of these two dimensions of parent-child relations important for achievement orientation, no one had previously examined both at the same time, for both parents simultaneously. We found that the particular combinations of parental relations were uniquely related to the achievement orientations of boys.

Our previous research focused on boys; therefore, these questions remained unanswered for girls: What combination of parent-child relations is most productive of achievement among girls? What combination of loving-rejecting and casual-demanding mothers and fathers is likely to result in high achievement orientations for their daughters? Alternatively, and of equal interest, is the question of what combination of parent-child relations produces the lowest achievement orientation.

The goal of this research is to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of parent-child relations and achievement orientations of girls so that we can begin to acquire the same level of knowledge as has been accumulated for boys. The focus of this paper is upon the nature of the relationship between parents and daughters rather than on the content of socialization. In contrast to investigations of parental emphasis upon, or encouragement for, achievement (for example: Rosen, 1962; or Sewell and Shah, 1968), this research concerns the basic interaction patterns between parents and children and the effects of these relationships upon achievement orientations.

The data for this study came from the questionnaire responses of a group of 949 girls who were high school seniors in 1967. At the time of the study they were attending high school in five moderate sized communities in Northern California. The self-administered questionnaire provided information on the student's average high school grades and her educational and occupational expectations. It also contained a substantial number of questions from Roe and Siegelman's scale of parent-child relations (1963).

Measures of Achievement. The measures of achievement in this research included both actual achievement and expectations for achievement. Actual achievement was reflected in the average high school grades that the student earned. This was the student's own estimation of whether her grades were "mostly A's, mostly B's, mostly C's, or mostly D's." In the dichotomous classification used, the dividing line between high and low achievement was between "mostly B's" and "mostly C's."

Educational expectations were measured by answers to the question, "What do you think the chances are that you will go on to college?" The responses "I expect to go" and "I probably will go" were classified as high educational expectations.

Occupational aspirations were indexed by the following open-ended question: "Ten years from now, in what occupation do you think you will most likely be working?" The responses were coded on a five category scale, with the first category being the "professional or high managerial" occupations. Girls whose responses were coded in this category were considered to have a high occupational orientation.

Parent-Child Relations. The parent-child relations scale used in this research was developed by Roe and Siegelman (1963). It had two bi-polar dimensions: (1) Loving--Rejecting; and (2) Casual--Demanding. The items

that composed this self-administered instrument are statements about specific relationships between the parent and the child. A representative item from the loving-rejecting scale was: "My mother made me feel wanted and needed." An item from the casual-demanding scale was: "My mother pushed me to do well in everything I did." The same items were used for the father. The subjects could respond: "Very true, Tended to be true, Tended to be untrue, or Very untrue."

Each subject was given summated rating scores for her perceptions of her father and mother on each of the two dimensions of parent-child relations. For the analysis the distribution of each summary score was divided at the median. Depending on whether they were above or below the median, subjects were classified as having a relationship with their mothers that was either loving or rejecting, and either casual or demanding. The same was done for the relationship with their fathers. The girls in the sample could then be categorized as having mothers and fathers who were either loving or rejecting and casual or demanding. By using these categories for each parent, sixteen possible parental relationship categories were produced. For example, a girl might have a mother who was loving and casual, while her father might be rejecting and demanding. The goal was to determine which combinations produced the greatest achievement orientations and which the least.

Findings

Data from the cross-tabulation for each of the three indices of achievement orientation and the sixteen combinations of parent-child relations are shown in Table 1 in the attached Appendix. With a few exceptions, fairly consistent patterns are seen. Some types of parent-child relations are consistently related to high achievement orientations

for daughters, and others are related to low achievement orientations.

Among the girls whose mothers were loving and demanding and whose fathers were rejecting and casual, many had high achievement orientations. These girls had the highest percentage expecting to go to college (78.0), the highest percentage expecting to enter a high managerial or professional occupation (43.8), and the third highest percentage with "A" or "B" grades (68.0). In contrast were the girls whose mothers were rejecting and casual and whose fathers were loving and demanding. Only 44.4 percent expected to go to college; 21.4 percent had high occupational expectations, and [illegible]1 percent had high grades in school. This comparison demonstrates that the particular combination of relationships with both parents is an important element in the achievement orientation of girls. In both of these cases the girls had one parent who was loving and demanding and another parent who was rejecting and casual. Yet one situation (a loving-demanding mother combined with a rejecting-casual father) produced very high achievement orientations, while the reverse case (a rejecting-casual mother and a loving-demanding father) produced very low achievement orientations.

A composite picture of the parental types associated with high, medium or low achievement orientations is found in Table 2 of the Appendix. This is based on the details of Table 1, and eliminates the necessity for a category-by-category analysis of the parental types and their relationships to each of the three measures of achievement orientation.

When we contrast the girls in the high and low achievement categories of Table 2, we find that girls with high achievement orientations generally perceived their fathers as rejecting and casual. On the other hand, it appears that having a father who is demanding and a mother who is rejecting

is associated with a low achievement orientation. However, it should be emphasized again that in general it is the particular combination of loving or rejecting and casual or demanding mother and father that is particularly important in shaping the achievement orientations of children.

Our previous research findings for sons showed a similar indication that a rejecting-casual mother combined with a loving-demanding father produced very low achievement orientations among male children. However, the findings indicate few other similarities between sons and daughters. The highest achievement orientations for boys (rank = 1) were found for those whose mothers and fathers were both loving and demanding. This combination of parents produced only medium to low achievement orientations among girls (rank = 11). The highest achievement orientations among girls were for those who saw their mothers as loving-demanding and their fathers as rejecting-casual. By contrast, this combination of parent-child relations was somewhat detrimental to the achievement orientations of sons (rank = 13).

Conclusions

In conclusion, two major points should be emphasized. First, it appears both in this research and in previous work that achievement orientation is related to the various combinations of parental relations with children. We have suggested some important parental combinations which should not be ignored in the investigation of family influences upon achievement orientations.

Secondly, it is now clear that the achievement orientations of girls differ from those of boys not only in their nature, but also in their family origins. The type of parent-child relations associated with high achievement orientations among girls is not a parallel to that

for boys. Girls must therefore be studied seperately from boys. I strongly urge other researchers to help in the accumulation of knowledge about achievement orientations among girls.

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TABLE 1: Percentage of Girls with High Achievement Orientations, by Perceived Characteristics of Their Mothers and Fathers.

Mother	Father		Percent With: A or B Grades	College Expectations	Professional Expectations	Ranked Percent: A or B Grades	Col. Exp.	Prof. Exp.
Loving	Casual	Loving Casual	$62.2_{(127)}$*	$58.6_{(128)}$	$23.8_{(126)}$	8	11	13
		Loving Demanding	$66.7_{(45)}$	$53.3_{(45)}$	$31.7_{(41)}$	5	14	7
		Rejecting Casual	$63.1_{(103)}$	$71.2_{(104)}$	$42.6_{(101)}$	6	5	2
		Rejecting Demanding	$71.1_{(45)}$	$62.2_{(45)}$	$28.9_{(45)}$	2	9	8
	Demanding	Loving Casual	$67.8_{(121)}$	$77.7_{(121)}$	$39.3_{(117)}$	4	2	3
		Loving Demanding	$60.0_{(40)}$	$72.5_{(40)}$	$12.8_{(39)}$	11	4	16
		Rejecting Casual	$68.0_{(50)}$	$78.0_{(50)}$	$43.8_{(48)}$	3	1	1
		Rejecting Demanding	$63.0_{(27)}$	$63.0_{(27)}$	$25.9_{(27)}$	7	8	10
Rejecting	Casual	Loving Casual	$57.7_{(26)}$	$61.5_{(26)}$	$36.0_{(25)}$	12	10	5
		Loving Demanding	$31.1_{(45)}$	$44.4_{(45)}$	$21.4_{(42)}$	16	16	14
		Rejecting Casual	$60.9_{(23)}$	$73.9_{(23)}$	$36.4_{(22)}$	10	3	4
		Rejecting Demanding	$51.1_{(45)}$	$48.9_{(45)}$	$28.6_{(42)}$	15	15	9
	Demanding	Loving Casual	$55.6_{(63)}$	$66.7_{(63)}$	$33.3_{(63)}$	14	7	6
		Loving Demanding	$61.1_{(90)}$	$54.4_{(90)}$	$25.3_{(87)}$	9	13	11
		Rejecting Casual	$75.0_{(24)}$	$69.6_{(23)}$	$25.0_{(24)}$	1	6	12
		Rejecting Demanding	$56.4_{(39)}$	$56.4_{(39)}$	$14.7_{(34)}$	13	12	15

*Number in parentheses is base for the percent.

TABLE 2: Parental Characteristics Associated with High, Medium and Low Achievement Orientations of High School Girls.

Girls with High Achievement Orientations had:

1. Mothers Loving and Demanding -- Fathers Rejecting and Casual
2. Mothers Loving and Demanding -- Fathers Loving and Casual
3. Mothers Loving and Casual -- Fathers Rejecting and Casual
4. Mothers Rejecting and Casual -- Fathers Rejecting and Casual
5. Mothers Rejecting and Demanding -- Fathers Rejecting and Casual

Girls with Medium Achievement Orientations had:

6. Mothers Loving and Casual -- Fathers Rejecting and Demanding
7. Mothers Rejecting and Casual -- Fathers Loving and Casual
8. Mothers Rejecting and Demanding -- Fathers Loving and Casual
9. Mothers Loving and Demanding -- Fathers Rejecting and Demanding
10. Mothers Loving and Casual -- Fathers Loving and Demanding
11. Mothers Loving and Demanding -- Fathers Loving and Demanding

Girls with Low Achievement Orientations had:

12. Mothers Loving and Casual -- Fathers Loving and Casual
13. Mothers Rejecting and Demanding -- Fathers Loving and Demanding
14. Mothers Rejecting and Casual -- Fathers Rejecting and Demanding
15. Mothers Rejecting and Demanding -- Fathers Rejecting and Demanding
16. Mothers Rejecting and Casual -- Fathers Loving and Demanding